



Testimony of Kathy Fischer
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Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
March 8, 2022

*An Act Requiring Legislative Approval For the Merger or Closing of Institutions
Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the
Consolidation of the Regional-Technical Colleges*

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Kathy Fischer and I am the President of the University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association (UCPEA) which represents approximately 2,100 professional staff at UConn. I am writing today to provide testimony **in support of HB 5300**, which provides necessary legislative oversight of any merger within the CSCU System. Transparency and accountability are critical.

The BOR/CSCU continues to hire upper-level management to support a consolidation while student services are understaffed and underfunded. This is nothing but a restructuring to add many new administrators while cutting staff that works directly with students. The Community Colleges are already understaffed in departments that directly serve students and money is being diverted to dozens of positions far removed from where teaching and learning happen. The only savings that have been realized to date have been from staff reduction by attrition, which negatively impacts services for students.

The decision to make each college a “branch” may impact the services and courses offered there. Some communities may lose the thriving community college that they know. Shared services are negatively impacting efficiency and redundancy, resulting in serious problems right now. Community Colleges should be just that – institutions that serve the individual needs of their diverse communities. Any positive benefits from the consolidation, such as seamless transfer, can be done without merging the twelve colleges through articulation agreements, and without the additional costs of hiring countless top administrators.

Higher education, including access to campuses with sufficient resources, programs, faculty and staff - must be a quality public good available to every single resident in CT - no matter what they look like, where they live or how much money they make. The students who attend our Community Colleges are overwhelmingly from Connecticut and will stay in Connecticut to live and work. These students are majority black and brown, working class and qualify for Pell grants, relying on these institutions as a crucial path to better lives. While we continue to hear that access and inclusion are priorities, consolidation, by its very nature, is not in line with the demands of equity or antiracism. Real equity would be giving these students every opportunity to succeed by investing more in their education, not trying to save money by cutting the staff and resources that directly serve them.

We must keep the community colleges strong for the state’s most underprivileged students by protecting the jobs that directly serve them. Our students are the next generation of Connecticut workers, business owners, innovators, and leaders; we must invest in them and the people who work with them, which in turn benefits us all.